

U.S. EPA Plans Urgent Lead Cleanup

Loewenthal Metals Site

Chicago, Illinois

March 2013

For more information

For questions, comments or for more information about the Loewenthal Metals site, you can contact these U.S. EPA team members:

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plans to take emergency action this spring to clean up high levels of lead in the soil at the former Loewenthal Metals site. The site is at 947 W. Cullerton St. in Chicago. U.S. EPA classifies the cleanup at the property as a “time-critical removal action” because people could get sick from the pollution if exposed. The Agency will conduct the work under the authority of the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, better known as the Superfund law.

Site background

The half-acre site is in a largely residential area, just west of Interstate 90/94. Historical records indicate the facility operated as a lead and zinc smelter, as well as a scrap metal dealer, during the 1940s.

In December 2011, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency referred the site to U.S. EPA for a potential cleanup action. The federal Agency began to investigate but could not obtain access to the property from the current owner. As a result, the Department of Justice obtained a warrant allowing U.S. EPA to enter the site last November to conduct sampling activities. The results of U.S. EPA's sampling showed unsafe lead levels as high as 1,200 parts per million in soil near the surface. Parts per million is usually abbreviated ppm in technical documents. Lead levels ran as high as 23,000 ppm a foot or more underground. The city of Chicago erected a temporary fence in December 2012 to prevent public access to the property.

Next steps

U.S. EPA is currently seeking to obtain the property owner's consent to access the property for the cleanup. If such consent is not given, U.S. EPA will evaluate its enforcement options, which include applying for a warrant to allow access. U.S. EPA will also sample soil at some properties adjacent to the Loewenthal site to determine the extent of the lead contamination.



EPA scientist takes a soil sample at the site using a geoprobe.

Científico de la EPA toma muestra de tierra con equipo de perforación.